



The Barn Hotel, West End Road, Ruislip

PLANNING STATEMENT

Summary

1. Chase New Homes has formulated this planning submission having regard to all relevant Development Plan policies, supplemental documents, national planning policy and guidance.
2. This submission has also been shaped having fully considered pre-application comments from the Council.
3. The Barn Hotel is a commercial use which is constrained by several factors in providing a modern hotel offering and it has been overtaken and out-competed by more attractive hotels and events space offerings. Taken together a hotel on this site is no longer a viable proposition.
4. The site sits on top of the designated Town Centre, opposite the tube and bus stations. It is one of the most sustainable sites within the borough where both national and local planning policies support the provision of new homes and densification to meet housing needs.
5. In addition to the strong policy support for intensification, the unique characteristics of the site create further justification for a reasonable level of densification with minimal impact on the street-scene, lending even greater weight maximising the site's development potential.
6. The site contains Grade II listed buildings which have been consumed by various extensions and alterations over the years and they have diminished the significance of these historic assets.
7. The listed buildings have also been poorly maintained and the structural surveys show their condition to be poor and at risk.
8. The re-development of the site presents a genuine opportunity to enhance and preserve the listed buildings to ensure their longevity in the future.
9. The listed buildings are not available in public views and even within the site they are not readily available or appreciable due to recent extensions.

10. The re-development of the site provides the opportunity to remove unsympathetic extensions, open up views onto the listed buildings and significantly improve their setting. This is a material benefit, which in combination with the residential conversion of these buildings, will preserve the buildings for future generations.
11. Chase New Homes is a developer with a reputation for providing high quality new homes with robust designs. As an independent builder we commence development as soon as possible to provide new homes for the local community.
12. The re-purposing of this site for housing sits in line with planning policy to provide homes, support the town centre with additional footfall and provide sustainable development with all amenities within walking distance.
13. The number of proposed new homes sits very comfortably in this location which in combination with the above should allow for permission to be granted.

Site and surroundings

14. The site is located within Ruislip, within the urban area and bordering to the Town Centre designation.
15. It is extremely well-connected, adjacent to Ruislip tube and bus stations, with easy vehicular links to the motorway.
16. For walking to local amenities, cycling and taking public transport, the site could not be better located.
17. Main vehicular access is gained from West End Road, a main route into the town centre, with a secondary access from Eversley Crescent.
18. Pedestrian access is also available directly onto the bridge section of West End Road, allowing easy access to the train station and the high street. A footpath at this location also provides direct access to Eversley Crescent/Willow Grove and onto Ruislip Manor tube station and shopping parade.
19. The site is barely discernible within the West End Road street scene, with the road rising up toward the railway line creating an average five metre level difference between the site and the road, with the site at a lower level.
20. In addition to the levels difference there is a substantial evergreen hedge with trees on the boundary with the road, four metres+ in height. The site is therefore extremely well-concealed from views along West End Road with an overall screening of approximately 10 metres when the levels and hedge are taken into account.
21. On the other side of West End Road are four-storey pitched-roof buildings that accommodate a retirement home. While it also sits in a lower position to West End Road, it is one-metre higher than the application site.

22. Immediately to the south of the site are apartments upto four-storeys in height while to the east in Eversley Crescent the scale clearly alters to bungalows and chalet bungalows.
23. Beyond the railway line there is a large supermarket and a tall residential building at eight storeys.
24. Within the site is a hotel use with centrally located Grade II listed buildings – Sherley's Farmhouse, the Oak Room and the Leaning Barn.
25. The Leaning Barn & Oak Room have extensive additions which link the two buildings and mask most of their original elevations.
26. As a result of the embankment/boundary screening on the west, the trees on railway land to the north and residential properties to the east, there are limited direct views onto the much of the site and very little perception of the listed buildings, if any.
27. The entrance to the site is such that no obvious appreciation of the listed buildings can be made, with the first set of buildings encountered being more recent additions.
28. To the north of the listed buildings are more recent two-storey pitched roof buildings and to the rear (east) are another set of buildings constructed in the last 15 years.
29. There is various ornamental planting on the embankment that supports the road and ancillary outbuildings that support the hotel function.

Proposal

30. This is a full application for re-development of the site to provide a residential scheme of 96 new homes.
31. The existing dated hotel use will be replaced with a vibrant new residential development that removes unsympathetic extensions to the listed buildings and creates a mix of residential conversion, new houses and new apartments.
32. The mix is as follows:
 - Sherleys Farm House conversion into ¾-bed home.
 - The Oak Room and Leaning Barn converted into ¾-bed home.
 - Seven new three-bed houses with access onto Eversley Crescent
 - Two new apartment blocks containing 87 apartments with a mix of one and two bed homes.
33. Much of the existing parking will be re-utilised but broken up with soft landscaping to enhance the site's appearance.
34. The listed buildings will be opened up with a new enhanced setting to allow greater appreciation of these historic assets.

35. Overall there will be a significant increase in soft landscaping about the site to appropriately frame the new homes and create a pleasant environment.
36. 66 parking spaces will be made available and the requisite number of cycle parking spaces will be provided to encourage sustainable travel.

Access

37. The access onto West End Road will be retained and enhanced, as will the access onto Eversley Crescent. Both accesses are acceptable in highways terms.
38. The existing pedestrian access onto West End Road by the bridge will be maintained and the site's layout will encourage its use with attractive planting and hard landscaping.

Pre-application discussions

39. Pre-application discussions with the Council occurred in 2019 with different applicants. It included design workshops and various options were discussed.
40. The main option consisted of four apartment buildings containing 148 apartments and some commercial. It proposed buildings upto 8-storeys, facilitated by removal of the attractive landscaped embankment and its replacement with a sheer wall.
41. A formal response from the Council was provided in March 2019.
42. The Council expressed concern over the loss of the hotel and employment uses, questioned the viability of using the listed buildings for commercial use given modern needs, disabled access etc. and the juxtaposition of new buildings against the listed building.
43. The loss of mature embankment buffer, considered to 'totally' screen views onto the site from West End Road, was also objectionable.
44. Overall the Council did not support the options presented.
45. This proposal has fully taken into account the Council's pre-application response, significantly reducing the quantum of development proposed by a third and also proposes the following:
 - Retention of landscaped embankment.
 - New buildings pulled away from the West End Road frontage to enhance setting.
 - Shallow-pitched low-rise housing near to boundary with Eversley Crescent to provide an appropriate transition and improve upon the existing arrangement.
 - Building 1 steps down toward Eversley Crescent to be lower in height than existing buildings in this location.

- Design takes into account the Council's stated 'Metroland' character of the area with Art Deco and Neo-Georgian influence.
- Listed buildings to be converted to residential use, a realistic and achievable proposition when considered against a possible commercial use.

46. The Design and Access Statement considers these matters further and demonstrates that the layout and design of the scheme are both attractive and neighbourly.

Loss of hotel use

47. The loss of hotel use is covered by a separate report from Savills, but it is very clear that the listed buildings and piecemeal development make a quality hotel offering very difficult and prevent franchise operators from taking it on, while competition from newer, more energy efficient hotel chains within the immediate locality are such that the hotel cannot compete on price or consistency of offering.

48. The Barn Hotel has also lost commercial clients due to closures of significant local employers, further detail of which is included in the Savills report, and it has also lost trade from visitors to Wembley Stadium/Arena due to significant new hotel provision on the Wembley estate.

49. The above are significant material factors that weigh in favour of abandoning the hotel use.

50. The hospitality employment pool remains extremely tight and this is expected to continue for some time, so the loss of employment on this site, much of which is part-time and seasonal, is not a significant issue. Employees will have no issue finding employment elsewhere.

51. The loss of a commercial use should also not be considered significant given the abundance of commercial properties elsewhere in the Borough and vacancy rates.

52. The Council's strategic policies state that they have an excess of warehouse and industrial employment land which can be released for other uses, potentially upto 4.9% of designated employment sites and 1.5% of Strategic Industrial Locations, **to aid regeneration and housing provision**.

53. The site would not support a retail use and there are already vacant retail uses nearby.

54. Offices in a post-Covid world are no longer in such demand and the listed buildings on the site would make any commercial use difficult to implement.

55. In policy terms It is noted that policies DME 5 and DME 6 have no express policy protection for hotel use, and so its loss is not resisted by policy. The site clearly does not fall within the definition of a community use so this would not be grounds for hotel retention.

- 56. IT is also noted that Policy DME 2: *Employment Sites Outside Designated Employment Areas* is positively framed whereby the loss of employment floorspace 'will normally be permitted'. This is important considering it is not phrased as 'resisted'. The presumption is in favour.
- 57. Parts ii), iii) & iv) of the DME 2 policy readily justify the loss of employment on the grounds that the listed buildings make re-use for meaningful employment unlikely, the restaurant use being unsustainable due to strong competition from casual dining on Ruislip High Street and the proposed introduction of residential (in what is a predominantly residential area) not affecting any adjoining employment land.
- 58. The re-provision for housing therefore should be supported.
- 59. The creation of new homes in this location also supports other policies, generating footfall/spending from new residents to add to the vitality of the town centre.
- 60. Our proposal is therefore considered to be fair, balancing the listed buildings' setting, re-utilising existing building footprints and making efficient use of this urban location, its level changes and screened setting, directly adjacent to a tube station, bus terminus and town centre.

Proposed buildings

- 61. The limited views of the new apartment blocks from public viewpoints will make them appear as only two to three-storey buildings from the north, west and south.
- 62. Although there would be a perception of additional height from Eversley Crescent, the main bulk of new buildings are a sufficient distance from Eversley Crescent dwellings and street scene to ameliorate their appearance.
- 63. Additionally the proposed built form within the vicinity of Eversley Crescent is actually less than currently exists, thereby presenting a betterment.
- 64. The daylight/sunlight report confirms that the surrounding properties would continue to receive excellent daylight and sunlight.
- 65. While we are proposing a change in building heights between the listed buildings and new apartment blocks, this is something that does not, in principle, represent harm and is indeed supported by the London Plan and GLA.
- 66. The Master Brewer site in Hillingdon proposed substantial tall buildings in a low-rise suburban setting near to the green belt. It was resisted by the council who stated that the scheme would 'completely overwhelm its smaller-scale suburban surroundings'.

67. The council sought a judicial review against the mayor's approval of a 514-unit scheme in towers upto 11 storeys in height. The challenge was however lost and the towers approved.
68. We are not proposing tall buildings in this instance despite being in a location where tall buildings already exist and policy supports densification, so the Council must have regard to this preferential location and consider the well-reasoned proposals being presented.
69. This site sits next to the transport interchanges and adjacent to the town centre, thereby encouraging sustainable travel.
70. It's also the case that tall buildings were permitted immediately adjacent to a Grade II listed building only ten minutes away from the site, on Ruislip Road at the White Hart Public House.
71. While this site sits within Ealing Council, the circumstances are similar to The Barn Hotel. But the White Hart site is a far smaller site, sits on a prominent open frontage within a low density area.
72. The scheme was approved with buildings upto eight-storeys and subject to consultation with the GLA, who actively encouraged the densification. The GLA has the opportunity to be involved with development proposals on larger schemes.
73. Our scheme doesn't include tall buildings despite being on a well-screened site where apartments will appear several storeys lower due to the change in levels and significant screening on the West End Road boundary. The new apartments will therefore be very discrete within the street scene.
74. The listed buildings cannot be appreciated from public views now and this will not change with the proposals.
75. The proposals will however open up and improve views onto the listed buildings within the site, and the change in height between existing and proposed is offset by the separation between the buildings and improved overall setting that will be created.
76. The Master Brewer and White Hart sites clearly show that such juxtapositions need to be realised and accepted as London seeks to develop sustainably into the future.
77. The proposal in this instance proposes a far lesser change than those schemes on a far better screened site with much stronger policy support.
78. The proposals presented are therefore very well balanced against policy and the direction of travel of development within London, and the density proposed is, if anything, low considering the strong credentials of the site.

79. Other planning matters

80. Policy T1 seeks to make 80% of all trips in London by foot, cycle or public transport by 2041, and for all development to make the most effective use of land, reflecting its connectivity and accessibility by existing and future public transport, walking and cycling routes.
81. Policy T2 seeks for development proposals to deliver patterns of land use that facilitate residents making shorter, regular trips by walking or cycling.
82. Hillingdon's own Local Plan seeks for sustainable forms of transport and reducing dependency on the private car. Therefore the Council's Local Plan is directing growth to locations that are near public transport interchanges, encouraging walking and cycling.
83. The National Planning Policy Framework further endorses the above:

'Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.

(NPPF Para. 105)

84. The Barn Hotel is without doubt one of the most sustainable locations in the urban area for residential development that would deliver the aims of the above policies, and it is clear that more efficient use of this site for the provision of new homes is supported by planning policy.

Conclusion

85. The site is in the urban area, on top of the town centre, tube station and bus terminus. It is very sustainably located.
86. It is well screened in public views and the changes in levels afford the opportunity to go higher than the surrounding dwellings.
87. There are four storey buildings opposite the site on the other side of West End Road, which is to be expected on a main approach into a town centre and which should be reflected on the eastern side of the road.
88. The council's hotel policies do not protect hotel uses.
89. The council's employment protection policy is positively worded in allowing change of use. The reports accompanying this application provide a clear and convincing case for the loss of employment and provision of new homes.

90. The hotel use is clearly no longer a viable concern when judged against competing hotels nearby. It has no unique selling point to generate business and warrant its retention.
91. Taller buildings next to listed buildings do not constitute reasons to resist an application; such juxtapositions are common, supported by policy and recent decisions and ultimately the designs of this scheme are sensitive to the listed buildings.
92. The sustainable urban location adjacent to a tube station/bus terminus, level changes/landscaping and the London Plan's 1000+ units/year requirement for Hillingdon are significant factors in favour of going taller than two storeys on this site.
93. Our scheme, with a maximum of six-storeys, is an appropriate balance given the above considerations.
94. The proposal represents a reasonable and possibly an under-utilisation of the site when considered against the backdrop of densification at transport interchanges and high housing targets.
95. It is respectfully requested that permission is granted to allow Chase New Homes to reinvigorate this site and provide much-needed new housing for local people.